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## NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

**GREAT MEN AND GREAT DAYS.** By Stéphane Lauzanne. New York: D. Appleton and Company.

Is it the function of a great editor to influence public opinion or merely to crystalize it? The answer is, of course, that in doing the one he does the other. Yet an editor convinces rather by exposition than by dialectics. One has to judge of his opinions not so much by their proof as by their inherent reasonableness, not so much by their originality as by their simplicity, not so much by their ingenuity as their honesty. Brilliant a great editor may be both as reasoner and as descriptive writer, but not with a lawyer-like subtlety. He is judge rather than lawyer—an unofficial judge in the court of public opinion, from which there is no appeal except to the court of history. And the public—not altogether at the mercy of its leaders, despite the growing difficulty of being really informed about public questions and public men—will always in the long run estimate the judge correctly. Samuel Butler says that most arguments convince us by their mere statement, or not at all; and the corollary of this is mere plausibility or mere special pleading can generally be recognized. We know when we are being propagandized or subjected to sly insinuation. We require of the leaders of public opinion that they shall be so straightforward that when they are biassed or when they fall into exaggerated statements of personal views, these opinions or impressions of theirs shall be advanced for just what they are worth and not supported by specious proof: otherwise we know that they are not playing the game. The morality of the profession of journalism is thus rather more like the morality of letters than the morality of science. And, as a cat may look at a king, a literary critic may venture to express his mind about a book like Lauzanne's *Great Men and Great Days*.

"Often," writes M. Lauzanne, "the journalist is wrong; but at least he leaves behind him portraits into the making of which he has put all his good faith." And concerning the good faith of the author's portraiture there can be no manner of doubt; the quality shines out between the lines of brilliant, though often slight and sometimes consciously restrained description.

Some of these pictures are little more than slight pencil sketches. No attempt is made to paint Théophile Delcassé, for example, as a life-size, heroic figure, yet a just impression is firmly and delicately outlined. "The judgment we can pass on M. Delcassé amounts to little. History will cast the final ballot; she will say whether it was a great or a little man who created around France that defense of alliances so solid that when the thunderbolt of

aggression was hurled at her in 1914, France could clothe herself in these alliances as a shield." The man's achievement stands out, and, though the personal touches are few, so does the man. One does not easily forget the picture of M. Delcassé on the day in 1898 when he first took possession of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a physically small man, with "a squad of well-sharpened pencils with fine points" on the table before him, nor his tranquil remark to his first visitor: "Now I am going to get to work. The first thing I am going to do is to straighten out all our differences with England."

Other portraits, though hardly more pretentious, are more lively and striking—they are incisively lined. Marshall Joffre who "gave forth confidence in the same way that other men give forth disquiet and agitation"; David Lloyd George, of whom it is said that he is "always sincere—or at least he gives the impression of being sincere; only his sincerities are contradictory—and this impression he does not give"; Georges Clémenceau, drawn with few strokes, and without caricature, yet really portrayed as in an engraving—a marvellous study—these descriptions, one thinks, could hardly be improved upon through more detail: they are sketches that serve all the purposes of paintings.

One is particularly interested, of course, in what M. Lauzanne writes about America, about Roosevelt, about Wilson. All these have been so much written about that it is surprising to find a real freshness and distinction in the expression even of a foreigner's views. M. Lauzanne scores, it may be said, not only by his detachment and his obvious good faith, but by a moderation and an easy skill in the selection of particulars which are elements in the characteristic French clearness. It is the professorial quality in the mind of Woodrow Wilson that he stresses: "Some people think this man is a dreamer, others hold that he is a genius. He is neither dreamer nor genius; he was a college professor. . . . He thought that he could play professor to the entire world." With real insight, the author gives prominence to a characteristic that was apparent to students who sat in Mr. Wilson's classes before he became a political figure: "The most curious thing is that his phrases often lay themselves open to entirely different interpretations." The estimate, however, is studiously just: "It was and will remain to the imperishable credit of President Wilson that he solidified the three sections of America, that he brought into unison the eager East, the nonchalant West, that he welded into one 110,000,000 men of all races, all tendencies, all origins." On the other hand, the sketch of Roosevelt is familiar and personal, portraying him as a great human being rather than as a type of mind: it is our own Roosevelt that we see in these pages. Of America the author speaks with the same good taste and with the same sureness of instinct as to what it is worth while to say. It is a little surprising, perhaps, to be told that "the great and immense virtue of the American people is its spirit of discipline"; yet on reflection one is inclined to think that, despite apparent exceptions, this view is correct.

Artistic, though never artful, nicely proportioned in all their parts to the author's purpose and to the needs of those for whom he writes, exact in emphasis; above all as convincing through good faith as through knowledge or wit, these sketches by M. Lauzanne are both informing and impressive.

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DEMOCRACY AND THE HUMAN EQUATION. By Alleyne Ireland. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company.

Is Alleyne Ireland intent upon restating certain evident truths about government or is he endeavoring to define a standpoint from which a new departure may hopefully be made? His whole book is so much in the nature of an essay—an *endeavor towards* some conclusion—that it is a little hard to answer this question.

Certainly, the author has collected and has stated in exact and original language, some not unusual criticisms of democratic government and of the popular conception of such government. He perceives everywhere a tendency to rhapsodize about government, to regard it as something that it is not and to consider it capable of doing what it cannot do. He reminds us that government cannot change human nature, that the "human equation," that unreckoned factor, is fundamental. Nor can education make us capable of democracy, if we have not the latent aptitude for it. An excursion into biology convinces us that inherited traits are practically unalterable. You can *ad-ducate* a man (to use an expressive word of Mr. Ireland's coinage) almost indefinitely; that is you can go on teaching him new facts; but you cannot *educate* him beyond a certain point—you cannot *bring out* what is not in him. Our government, moreover, which was intended to be, and which ought to be, a representative government, tends continually to become government by delegation—quite a different thing; for government by delegation implies all the weaknesses of which democracy has been traditionally accused. Of late years, persistent efforts have been made to secure direct legislation through such devices as the initiative, referendum, and recall, and more recently the menace of Bolshevism and of all the various subversive tendencies for which Bolshevism is a convenient label, has become too serious to be disregarded. But have we the virtues of democracy? These virtues, Mr. Ireland thinks, are more or less mythical; democracy has no real causal connection with many of the values associated with it, and some of these values are faiths rather than realities. What, for example, is freedom? The author subjects the whole concept to a destructive analysis, and seems to show that, in any reasonable interpretation of the term, freedom has little application to conditions in the United States to-day. The whole exposition, though keen and forcible, may be a little trying to readers other than those whose habit of mind is rhapsodic.

Perhaps it would be a fair summing up of much that Mr. Ireland writes in this book to say that while democracy (which came into being gradually and more or less fortuitously as the reaction from certain abuses) has been fairly